

**Exploration and Analysis of the collage of represented 'Truth': *Variations*
in the narratives of Operation Blue Star**

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"Punjab is not just a state. It is a state of mind... It is sometimes hard to find out where politics ends and religion begins."- M.V.Kamath¹

The Operation Blue Star is considered as one among the major political as well as historical events witnessed by the Indian state ever since independence. And like all major historical events are narrated based on the dynamics of locatedness of the author and the receptive tendency of the targeted audience, the narration of the Operation Blue Star follows the same trajectory. Therefore, there is a subterranean level of politics within the engagement in historiography and it is important to be investigated if not completely arrive at a speculative understanding altogether. There have been theories which mention that the truth is narrated by ones holding the seat of power. But the important point here in this paper is to understand how historiography differs within the ones with a dominant voice and how the same event is narrated differently by different narrators to give varying shades to the same event. The paper will delve into how historiography has a relation with the author's socio-cultural and professional location, and will also look at how his/her ideological and subjective viewpoints re-orient and re-defined the actual event. The authors give a particular fact their subjective shade of understanding to glorify and magnify certain details and overlooks or trivialize certain others. So, down the generations when these various shades percolate down as sanctioned or canonised versions of reality, the reader actually gets a distorted picture of reality under the iron veil of apparent similarities and coherence.

Something similar happened to me when I went through various narrations that claim to have chronicled the infamous Operation Blue Star (and I am using the word infamous because it was a solid blow both to the military as well as political apparatuses of the nation; the situations thereafter got heated to such an extent that the Indian political machinery found it nearly impossible to aptly justify the use of military tactics in a land like India where politics

¹ From *Myth and Reality. The Punjab Story*. 1984. Foreword. KPS Gill. New Delhi: Lotus Roli, 2011.Pp. 145.

and religion are so astutely interwoven and sensitized that it is really difficult to separate the two and take a hard decision.) Coming back to the point of varying narratives of the same operations chronicled by different personalities, whose authority and legitimacy behind their validation of their respective narratives could not be questioned due to their professional engagement and experience? Till an extent it is agreeably fine to reason the differences between the events narrated by military officers and journalists as based on their professional and ideological differences. But the thing gets complex when the issue gets beyond professional differences and the subjective standpoints creep in to shape the events in accordance with the narrator's personal understandings. For example, when the commanders within the army have varied opinions about the operation and the same is the case with the journalists. And what finally bewilders me is that when the narrator's claim to narrate it out of their personal experiences. Now the question that comes to my mind is how one can have different experiences of the same incidents within the event.

So, to solve this puzzle I am taking recourse to certain methodological tools. Firstly, I have tried to sketch out a chronological and a detailed timeline of the various incidents within the Operation based on my primary sources of study which are namely *The Punjab Story*, *Amritsar: Mrs. Gandhi's last battle* and *Operation Blue Star: The True Story* in chronological order of their publication, to arrive at an understanding of how things were varying and to look into the points of convergence as well as divergences. The third book keeps referring to the other two as it is written retrospectively. Even the second book has many references to the first, even if it is published a year later. Another aspect of my methodology is to look into the reactions to the Operation; the immediate and the retrospective. *The Punjab Story* is an immediate reaction to the event was published in 1984 itself, followed by *Amritsar: Mrs. Gandhi's Last Battle* first published in 1985. Differing from the reactions in these two books and some reports published after the operation Lt. General Kuldeep Singh Brar the commander of the military expedition in retrospect undertook the responsibility to clear the air on behalf of the government in General and the army in particular. Now to brand the reactions on account of the temporality, to be either utterly critical or out rightly defensive will be altogether problematic and so it is important to understand it as an ad mixture of criticism as well as defence both the types with varying degrees of prominence. Thirdly, I will look at the linguistic variations and complications, the use of language as a significant tool in particular to investigate into the variations in the tone of the narratives and remarking the linguistic view points to arrive at the variations in the narratives.

As a background to my study I have looked at the concepts of Nationalism, Democracy and how the state uses its repressive machinery to stop the fragmentation of the Nation-State. The constitution does provide ample scope for state organization under Article 3 mentioned in the constitution, but the same constitution does not accommodate any form secessionist tendency which poses threat to the unity and integrity of the nation. Within a democracy there is potential chance of state taking the means of violence to take control of the affairs of the state and to protect the nation from disintegration. There are constitutionally mentioned and sanctioned protocols to be maintained in a cordial Centre- State relationship. In this context, another background material of mine is the book by Bhagwan S. Gyaneer titled *Problems of Indian Nationalism*. Bhindranwale, the Sikh ultra-radical fundamentalist apart from being the core figure of extremism in Punjab in those days, also serve as a site of conflict within varying nationalist tendencies.

Quoting Mr. Gyaneer from his book *Problems of Indian Nationalism*, which states that, “A nation is not a static entity. It is “dynamic” by nature, subject to growth, decay and disintegration. Under favourable conditions, Nations expand, grow and out-grow: Under adverse conditions, they shrink, decline and perish... Nationalism is an important state or a step in the vertical process of social evolution.”²

But for a government entrusted with the responsibility of administering the nation by judiciously mobilizing its resources, safeguarding the rights of its citizen and upholding the spirit of unity and integrity of the nation does not have enough space to delve into the dynamicity of the nation as an entity. Hence, the government found it impossible to accommodate the secessionist tendency of Bhindranwale in context of the political atmosphere and the constitutional constraints. On the other hand, under the guise of safeguarding the nation they took recourse to military means under the brand of “use of bare minimum of force required for achieving this objective”³, the government under the prevailing circumstances undertook the Operation Blue Star which is reported by India Today as one of the top ten political disgraces of the nation.

The events that happened chronology can be compartmentalised in three different phases- pre-operation phase, the Operation phase and the post-operation phase. The pre-operation phase makes grounds for the necessity to launch such an operation and the political scenario at the backdrop of the Operation. Bhindranwale as claimed was a product of the congress

² Mittal, S.C. Introduction. *Problems of Indian Nationalism*. By Bhagwan S. Gyaneer. Pp-66.

³ From Tully, Mark and Satish Jacob. *Amritsar: Mrs Gandhi's Last Battle* .Pp- 157.

against the Akali trio- Prakash Singh Badal, Harchand Singh Longowal and Gurcharan Singh Tohra. The Congress was also accused of using Bhindranwale to dominate the politics in Punjab, where the religious dimension is so closely intermixed the political dimension. But much to the surprise of the Congress Bhindranwale backfired and the political equation went haywire. As Subhash Kirpekar a journalist who stays back in Amritsar during the Operation states in his article “Operation Bluestar: An Eyewitness Account” that “Nowhere is the mix of religion and politics seen so glaringly as in Punjab. This is especially so in the context of the Bhindranwale phenomenon wherein religion was converted into a handmaiden of politics. It was not ordinary politics as understood in terms of a democratic framework, but the politics of subversion and secession.”⁴ Lt. General Aurora states, “One must not forget that Bhindranwale had been taken into custody by the then chief minister, Darbara Singh, but was released under mysterious circumstances. Worse still, he (Bhindranwale) was allowed to travel all over India with an armed bodyguard like a conquering hero.”⁵

There are not much of differences in the pre-operation phase apart from being wider in temporal framework as some backgrounds dates back to the partition days and the Nehruvian era, which chronologically follows down to the days of Indira Gandhi and various resolutions that had been signed. But, within these wide arrays of events from the ‘Genesis of Hindu-Sikh Divide’ by Khuswant Singh, to ‘Akali Dal: an enemy within’ to M. V. Kamath’s ‘Myth and Reality’ one can trace coherence in the history as it has been rendered. The problem of differences and thereafter distortion of the event happens vehemently in the reactions or the post-Operation phase. Not every writer got a chance to be the part of the Operation per say and so their versions of the Operation was borrowed. Mark Tully and Satish Jacob give a note in their book *Amritsar: Mrs. Gandhi’s Last Battle* that the chapter “Operation Blue Star” in the book is sourced from *The Punjab Story: 1984* and D.R. Mankekar’s *22 Fateful Days*. Some of the writers whose works are compiled in the book *The Punjab Story* claims to have a firsthand account of the operation, but those narratives consists of descriptions and interviews of events just preceding the operation. On June 3rd, 1984, two days prior to the operation Subhash Kirpekar goes to interview Bhindranwale and the level of confidence or rather over-confidence is clearly reflected in his rhetoric. When asked- “Will you not be outnumbered by the army, which has superior weapons too?” He replied- “Sheep always outnumber the lions.

⁴ From *Operation Blue Star: An Eye-Witness Account*. *The Punjab Story*. 1984. Foreword. KPS Gill. New Delhi: Lotus Roli, 2011. Pp103.

⁵ From *Assault on The Golden Temple Complex*. *The Punjab Story*. 1984. Foreword. KPS Gill. New Delhi: Lotus Roli, 2011

But one lion can take care of a thousand sheep. When the lion sleeps, the birds chirp. When it awakes, the birds fly away. There is silence (laugh).... He is not a Sikh who fears death and he who fears death is not a Sikh.”⁶

There are differences in the way language is to discursively narrate the events. About the Bhindranwale myth becoming a volatile subject of discussion over his death, Tavleen Singh in the article “Terrorist in the Temple” says ‘Outside, in the Punjab countryside, his presence had loomed over everything more ominous than ever before, but in the temple it was his absence that was everywhere as if an era had ended. A chapter of history closed’⁷, gives a vivid picture of the myths and stories going about his death and consequently the glamour that was being added to Bhindranwale’s coveted reputation. ‘His ‘martyrdom’ had made him a saint to many and superhuman to many others.” Talveen Singh’s use of language here is quite pertinent in giving the narration a poetic dimension by talking to a presence that loomed over everything even after his death is worthy of appreciation. Another aspect that he brings in here is Derridian concept of Absence-presence, in the context of Bhindranwale’s absence being a prominent presence and so the description of the sanitised temple complex now without Bhindranwale’s overwhelming presence is vividly foregrounded in another poetic imagery which says, “Everything was cold, white and empty.”⁸ In these lines, Tavleen Singh resonates or match the critical spirit of Jayanta Mahapatra as he does so in the poem ‘Dhuli’, which was critical of Asoka’s greatness and his military prowess, and talks in length of Asoka’s renunciation. The words ‘cold’, ‘white’ and ‘empty’ hints at the images of infertility and an absence. The colour ‘white’ which speaks of peace, also ironically hints at a sense of lament and loss. But in this context, it is that peace which is gained at the cost of such scale of bloodshed. By use of language in such varied forms, Tavleen Singh moves a step ahead from just being a political commentator and leading columnist to a person with a hidden literary spirit which is foregrounded in the way he narrativised the myth surrounding the death of Bhindranwale. He states, “Later, when the army captured the Akal Takht they discovered an escape route that they had not known about. Bhindranwale could have escaped if he wanted to. Why did he choose not to? The answer to that question died with him, as did the answers to many other questions... The Bhindranwale myth may, by the look of things,

⁶ From *Operation Blue Star: An Eye-Witness Account*. The Punjab Story. 1984. Foreword. KPS Gill. New Delhi: Lotus Roli, 2011. Pp106.

⁷ From *Terrorist in the Temple*. The Punjab Story. 1984. Foreword. KPS Gill. New Delhi: Lotus Roli, 2011. Pp.39-40.

⁸ From *Terrorist in the Temple*. The Punjab Story. 1984. Foreword. KPS Gill. New Delhi: Lotus Roli, 2011. Pp. 39

prove to be more powerful than the man.”⁹ Being a political commentator he does not arrive at conclusions, but analytically describes the event and leaves it open-ended to the readers to perceive accordingly to their subjective affiliation, taste and flavour.

There was lots of pressure on the government which pushed them hard to launch the Operation. There has been criticism about the date chosen for the operation just two days after the Guru Arjun Dev’s martyrdom celebration day 3rd June, 1984, in the Golden Temple where a huge number of public had gathered. Mark Tully quotes an intelligence agency’s intercepted input that- “Bhindranwale was about to start a well-organised campaign to murder the Hindus in villages throughout Punjab... Twenty-three people were killed in the last twenty-four hours before Mrs. Gandhi made her broadcast.”¹⁰ On the evening of 21st July 1984, Giani Kirpal Singh answers Subhash Kirpekar about being asked that – “When Bhindranwale ordered killings, could he not be treated as an oppressor and punished?” Giani ji answered “Bhindranwale helped the Congress against the Akali Dal and the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee in 1979. The government allowed him to roam freely in New Delhi with weapons. All this was done to give us a bad name and humiliate us. He was a Congress agent.”¹¹

Tracing the line of events that precipitated to the operation, M.V. Kamath in his article ‘Myth and Reality’ as mentioned in the book *The Punjab Story* sounds quite critical of the government’s policy towards Punjab in General, firstly by not neutralising the differences and problems between the Punjabi speaking minority who is under the potent threat of an ethnic onslaught by the Hindi speaking majority and the secondly to the fact that Congress remained silent all through to let the events heat up to such an proportion that it could be only sorted by such a gory bloodbath. Kamath quoted from the book, *Heritage of Sikh Culture* by Pritam Singh Gill, which to Kamath was an ‘eye-opener’ to the Punjab politics. With this he could supposedly differentiate between the myths propagated and the reality. He quotes “Sikhs have their own culture quite distinct from that of other people inhabiting the rest of India. Their religious beliefs differ; their heritage *differs*; so their culture *differs*...” This lines with repeated use of the word ‘differs’ hints at a separatist tendency with a sense of desired alienation and a drift away from the rest of the masses. Language is used on a valiant manner to voice out the supposed gravity of the problem. He states, “For them Hindi is the national

⁹ From *Myth and Reality*. *The Punjab Story*. 1984. Foreword. KPS Gill. New Delhi: Lotus Roli, 2011. Pp. 71

¹⁰ From Tully, Mark and Satish Jacob. *Amritsar: Mrs Gandhi’s Last Battle*. Pp- 148

¹¹ From *Operation Blue Star: An Eye-Witness Account*. *The Punjab Story*. 1984. Foreword. KPS Gill. New Delhi: Lotus Roli, 2011. Pp118.

language. They want to impose their language, religion and culture on the minority communities directly or indirectly. *They want to kill their cultures and make India a mono-cultural state.* In reality, they are after will-of-the-wisp.”¹² Kamath also quotes Gill so as to amplify his point further which states that, ‘The Sikhs have a history; they have a home; they have traditions; they have a well-developed language; they have a religion; they have a distinct society, morality and aesthetics. They have a separate culture which they want to protect...’¹³ Later his aggressive choice of words to portray the plight of the Sikh during and after partition is callous, as he states ‘Sikhs have been ‘Victims of Hindu Nationalism’. As he put it: ‘Indians got freedom not the Sikhs... Out of a frying pan they fell into fire. They were made to choose between two evils.’¹⁴ This metaphor which apparently shows the pathetic conditions of the Sikh community on the either side of the border, also hints at a deeper sentiment in variations of the degrees of torment, as fire is the worst possible case, frying is comparatively better. Therefore, there is a silent preference though without mass consensus to move to the comparatively better condition; that is across the borders; Pakistan. Kamath, who is described in the book as a veteran journalist and successor of Khuswant Singh in erstwhile *Illustrated Weekly of India* and the only one to present an objective picture of the operation, but to my reading of his narration, I get hints of his subjectivity shaping the course of his narration but still he being awarded the Padma Bhusan Award in 2004 is another scepticism that creeps into my mind. Towards the end of his article he is blatantly critical of the government where he throws the rhetorical question asking, ‘Could the events in Punjab have been prevented? Hindsight shows us that they could have been. But now we can go only forward, not backward... No doubt more details could be filled in, especially the relations between Zial Singh and Bhindranwale and the role of Congress(I) in encouraging terrorism. But enough has been stated, one hopes, to show that nothing is as simple as it seems.’¹⁵ The words like ‘encouraging terrorism’ are pretty strong words used to accuse the government.

Lt. General K.S. Brar who was the commander of the whole operation justified many questions thrown at the government’s military strategy. ‘Events like those that occurred on 5 June, are unfortunate milestones of horror to be avoided in future at all costs, lest the ensuing conflagration cause immeasurable misery to a vast horde of humanity, and even threaten to

¹² From *Myth and Reality. The Punjab Story*. 1984. Foreword. KPS Gill. New Delhi: Lotus Roli, 2011.Pp. 150.

¹³ From *Myth and Reality. The Punjab Story*. 1984. Foreword. KPS Gill. New Delhi: Lotus Roli, 2011.Pp. 150.

¹⁴ From *Myth and Reality. The Punjab Story*. 1984. Foreword. KPS Gill. New Delhi: Lotus Roli, 2011.Pp. 150.

¹⁵ From *Myth and Reality. The Punjab Story*. 1984. Foreword. KPS Gill. New Delhi: Lotus Roli, 2011. Pp. 150.

destroy the Indian state once again.’¹⁶ He also states ‘The meticulous and detailed planning that such an operation entails is, by itself, a stupendous exercise... the most fascinating operations in the annals of military history.’¹⁷ The words used by Lt. General K.S. Brar is diplomatic, with smart choice of words to describe the event as well as justify the ways undertaken by the government makes his narrative rather an interesting read. It will be good to see and understand how he defends the stand of the Army and the government by wise choice of words. The lines like ‘unfortunate milestones of horror to be avoided in future at all costs’, hints at his sense of lament at the face of such bloodbath which needs to be avoided in future. In his rhetoric of diplomacy he shows that the government and the Army did not want to take such a step, but the unavoidable circumstances force them to take such a hard decision. He tries to show how the government was compelled to react to safeguard the nation.

But some other military veterans like Lt. General Aurora differed to Brar’s view in stating the plan as “smacked of *ad hocism*”. “He told that the army had been asked to act too quickly without adequate reconnaissance and planning.”¹⁸ Retd. Lt. General Harbaksh Singh criticised the whole concept of use of infantry attack: he says, “You don’t send infantry into places where they have no cover.” Retired Major General S.N. Antia says that ‘there has been an erroneous civil and military assessment that the terrorist would surrender.’¹⁹ These were some among the many tactical criticism which were answered as well as noted as a result of which the next Operation in Golden Temple under the guidance of KPS Gill and Prime Ministership of Rajiv Gandhi, Operation Black Thunder or the Gill plan was carried out, which was comparatively a huge success. But like the other General, another prominent figure in the armed forces of Punjab KPS Gill was critical of the operation and was not satisfied with the planning and execution of the deployed forces. Comparatively, Gill draws an alternate plan in form of the Gill plan or commonly known as Operation Black Thunder, in the place of action; the Golden Temple, which in action proves his point that Operation Blue Star was not planned hence the number of casualties and thereafter the controversy was in huge proportion. But Lt. General Brar retrospectively in 1993 replies astutely saying that “The execution of such an operation is no mean task; in fact, no operation ever goes through as planned. The various twists and turns in the events as they emerge need to be studied and

¹⁶ Brar, K.S. Lt. Gen. Operation Blue Star: The True Story. pp. 2.

¹⁷ Brar, K.S. Lt. Gen. Operation Blue Star: The True Story. pp. 3.

¹⁸ From Tully, Mark and Satish Jacob. Amritsar: Mrs Gandhi’s Last Battle. Pp. 187.

¹⁹ From Tully, Mark and Satish Jacob. Amritsar: Mrs Gandhi’s Last Battle. Pp. 187-188.

documented in posterity, lest truth get drowned in the quicksand of fractured perception.’²⁰ Brar states clearly in his book, ‘It is these myths that need to be exploded by truthful narration of the facts.’²¹ By saying so, Brar claim to present a true picture amidst the distorted versions of reality.

Brar in a reaction to Gill, states in his book ‘Operation Blue Star was a totally different ball game compared to Black Thunder. Until the launching of Blue Star, the militants were convinced that they would be subjected to the threat of having to face the security forces inside the temple... Some of the other major dissimilarities in the two scenarios also need to be understood. The militants these days do not have cult figures such as Bhindranwale to idolise, nor a professional General such as Shabeg Singh to provide military leadership, and to lead from the front until martyrdom is achieved, as was the case during Blue Star.’²² Here, Brar in answering Gill also hints to the limits the government can go and steps that it can undertake in compelling circumstances, if they are pushed to the edge.

The phase that gets a lot of relevance in this paper is the post-operational phase. 6th June 1984 onwards people have been reacting differently. After the operation many corpse were carried but neither Kirpekar nor Shekhar Gupta reports about the army open firing at the prisoners with their hands tied behind out of frustration as mentioned in Chellany’s reports. Kirpekar does mention that he has seen many slain bodies of soldiers and civilians being carried away. Kirpekar states that “At 7 pm. I see the first corpse carrier vehicle going towards the cremation ghat. The death toll has began.” He made the scene even poignant by adding linguistic flavour to his vocabulary by stating that “The breeze carries an acrid smell, the sickly, clinging smell of the burnt flesh.” He also says that “I have a feeling the number of dead is much more than is officially stated. Going by the rumour- mills in Amritsar, the casualty figure is over 2,000. But I have no way to substantiate this as most cremations were done under curfew.”²³

Even Shekhar Gupta the present editor-in-chief of The Indian Express, claims to have witnessed the entire event from close proximity apart from the military involvement. But his account from a journalistic point of view differs from the ground breaking report ever

²⁰ Brar, K.S. Lt. Gen. Operation Blue Star: The True Story. pp.3.

²¹ Brar, K.S. Lt. Gen. Operation Blue Star: The True Story. pp. 4.

²² Brar, K.S. Lt. Gen. Operation Blue Star: The True Story. pp. 154.

²³ From *Operation Blue Star: An Eye-Witness Account*. The Punjab Story. 1984. Foreword. KPS Gill. New Delhi: Lotus Roli, 2011. Pp.112-113.

published about this operation by Brahma Chellany. Though I could not get hold of the originally published report by Chellany by New York Times, but I just got of some secondary information of how Chellany's reports put the government under the global geo-political scanner including that of UN Human Rights Commission as gross violation of human rights. According to a secondary source, Chellany's reports which stirred the moves by the government is detailed as, 'His first dispatch, front-paged by the New York Times, The Times of London and The Gaurdian, reported a death toll about twice of what authorities had admitted. According to the dispatch, about 780 militants and civilians and 400 troops had perished in fierce gunbattles. The high casualty rates among security forces were attributed to "the presence of such sophisticated weapons as medium machine guns and rockets in the terrorists' arsenal." Mr. Chellaney also reported that "several" suspected Sikh militants had been shot with their hands tied. The dispatch, after its first paragraph reference to "several" such deaths, specified later that "eight to 10" men had been shot in that fashion. In that dispatch, Mr. Chellaney interviewed a doctor who said he was picked up by the army and forced to conduct postmortems despite the fact he had never done any postmortem examination before. The number of causalities reported by Mr. Chellaney were far more than government reports, and embarrassed the Indian government, which disputed his casualty figures and accused him of inflammatory reporting. The Associated Press stood by the reports and figures, the accuracy of which was also "supported by Indian and other press accounts" according to Associated Press; and reports in The Times and The New York Times.'²⁴

But to the accusations by Chellany Lt. General Brar reacts vehemently saying that Chellany "drew a lot of mileage from a 'slandorous' and 'vicious' despatch sent out by him accusing the army. He did admit that there was an incident recorded when a soldier had to fire at some prisoners as they tried to escape with weapons. "What needs to be seen in correct perspective is that the deaths were the result of an immediate reflex action of one individual, who acted accordingly to his impulse at that particular moment. But this certainly does not justify the criticism that the prisoners were deliberately murdered in cold blood. When asked about government taking such a strong and bold step to attack one of the holiest shrine of the nation and the legitimacy of the military action in a Place of worship, keeping the religious sentiments at stake, he answered that 'The forces of secession, operating from inside the Temple, had to be removed or eliminated, in order to prevail the breakup of the country. It had become an inescapable necessity to cry halt before it was too late.'²⁵ He also rhetorically

²⁴ From <<http://www.unp.me/f15/brahma-chellaney-only-independent-reporter-of-1984-bluestar-77667/#ixzz1u9BycPU1>> accessed on 7th May, 2012 at 0700 hours.

²⁵ Brar, K.S. Lt. Gen. *Operation Blue Star: The True Story*. pp. 140.

questioned back asking ‘hadn’t the sanctity of the holy shrine been defiled already by Bhindranwale and his group of militants who had converted a place of worship, revered by millions into an arsenal?’²⁶ To justify the legitimacy of a military assault on the Golden Temple, Brar went ahead to cite examples of The Grand Mosque in Mecca and the Monte Cassino Monastery in Italy which had been converted into armed fortress by the militants and had to be stormed in to flush out the extremists by use of military might and reinstate the sanctum sanctorum idea of the establishment. Now, both for Chellany and Brar, to prove the point the degrees of appropriation and level of rational assertion in their respective justifications will help in proving their respective versions of the incident.

Shekhar Gupta’s immediate reaction then was a consolatory tone which differed from Chellany’s outright criticism. Gupta saw the incident as part of nation building. Thousands of citizens have been killed during the freedom fighting, then partition and the same now happens here to save the nation. He states- ‘But then, isn’t blood, sweat and tears the kind of stuff destinies of nations are built of?’²⁷ Later of course, Shekhar Gupta admitted on behalf of the Indian Express of the report published which was ‘found that what Chellaney had written was absolutely correct.’²⁸ But, even earlier neither does Gupta nor do Kirpekar oppose Chellany but remain silent regarding certain incidents, which is supposedly amplified by Chellany. Now, what gets interesting is the dynamics of politics of silencing and voicing out. The question that arises is that why were Gupta and Kirpekar silent to the issue then when Chellany was the only one to be questioned by the authorities. ‘The New York Times noted editorially, "he was never arrested or formally charged, though he was subjected to intense interrogation."²⁹ Is there a silent sponsorship on the part of the state that made Gupta to perceive the incident under the garb of nation- building process?

If we consider that the journalist were exaggerating the facts on account of their detailed description of the aftermath and the damage caused it becomes interesting to hear it from a veteran, a Bangladesh war hero, Lt. General Aurora who says that “Damage to the entire complex was much beyond what was reported in the media news or the press... It was claimed that the Golden Temple was not damaged during the operations.... In actual fact the Golden Temple had more than 250 bullet marks which I saw with my own eyes... Chances

²⁶ Brar, K.S. Lt. Gen. *Operation Blue Star: The True Story*. pp. 141.

²⁷ From *Blood, Sweat and Tears. The Punjab Story*. 1984. Foreword. KPS Gill. New Delhi: Lotus Roli, 2011

²⁸ From <<http://www.unp.me/f15/brama-chellaney-only-independent-reporter-of-1984-bluestar-77667/#ixzz1u9NIElg9>> Accessed from 7.5.12 on 0815 hours.

²⁹ From <<http://www.unp.me/f15/brama-chellaney-only-independent-reporter-of-1984-bluestar-77667/#ixzz1u9NIElg9>> Accessed from 7.5.12 on 0815 hours.

are that in the heat of the battle some small arm fire was directed on Harmandir Sahib inspite of the instructions to the contrary. It is understandable; however, is why the information about the damage was kept a secret. Such secrecy only resulted in the loss of credibility of the government-controlled media.”³⁰ He laments the fact that the situation was left to be aggravated to such a level that it could be only be resolved by means of this gory blood bath. “Had a solution been found in time, and it was feasible to do so, this catastrophe need not have occurred.” Towards the end he puts up a question, “Finally, is it fair to place an entire minority community in the dock for the sins of a few and to divert attention of the country from the failings of the administration?”³¹ This question clearly hints at Lt. General Aurora’s ideological departure from that of Lt. General Brar even if they belong to the same professional backgrounds. Brar justifies the act of the government and owns the responsibility of the Operation and the criticism thereafter. General K. Sundarji the G.O.C of the operation said, “We went inside with humility in our hearts and prayers on our lips.” Mark Tully and Satish Jacob states in their book, *Amritsar: Mrs. Gandhi’s Last Battle* stating that the day after the operation, as mentioned by Kirpekar, the army was in an ugly mood; ‘some jawans were kicking some of the eleven suspected terrorists’. But, Tully and Jacob also states that ‘It was not just the casualties they had suffered which enflamed the soldiers’ tempers. The defenders of the Golden Temple had also committed atrocities. The defenders of the Golden Temple had also committed atrocities. They threw grenades at the civilians who surrendered in the hostel complex. They tortured two junior commissioned officers. One was skinned alive and then blown up. They hacked to death an army doctor who went to treat civilian casualties. War is never pretty, and it was full scale war which broke out between the Indian army and the followers of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale.’³²

Therefore the operation from a reactionary and receptive point of view becomes very crucial in understanding the dynamics and look at how historiography of the same event is contoured, influenced and profiled by the location and locatedness of the various writers in the socio-cultural, ideological and professional standpoints. Hence the choice of words depend a lot on the way events are narrated and who is narrating it. This is the dynamicity worthy of investigation as well as study.

³⁰ From *Assault on The Golden Temple Complex*. The Punjab Story. 1984. Foreword. KPS Gill. New Delhi: Lotus Roli, 2011

³¹ From *Assault on The Golden Temple Complex*. The Punjab Story. 1984. Foreword. KPS Gill. New Delhi: Lotus Roli, 2011

³² From Tully, Mark and Satish Jacob. Amritsar: Mrs Gandhi’s Last Battle. Pp. 191.

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